

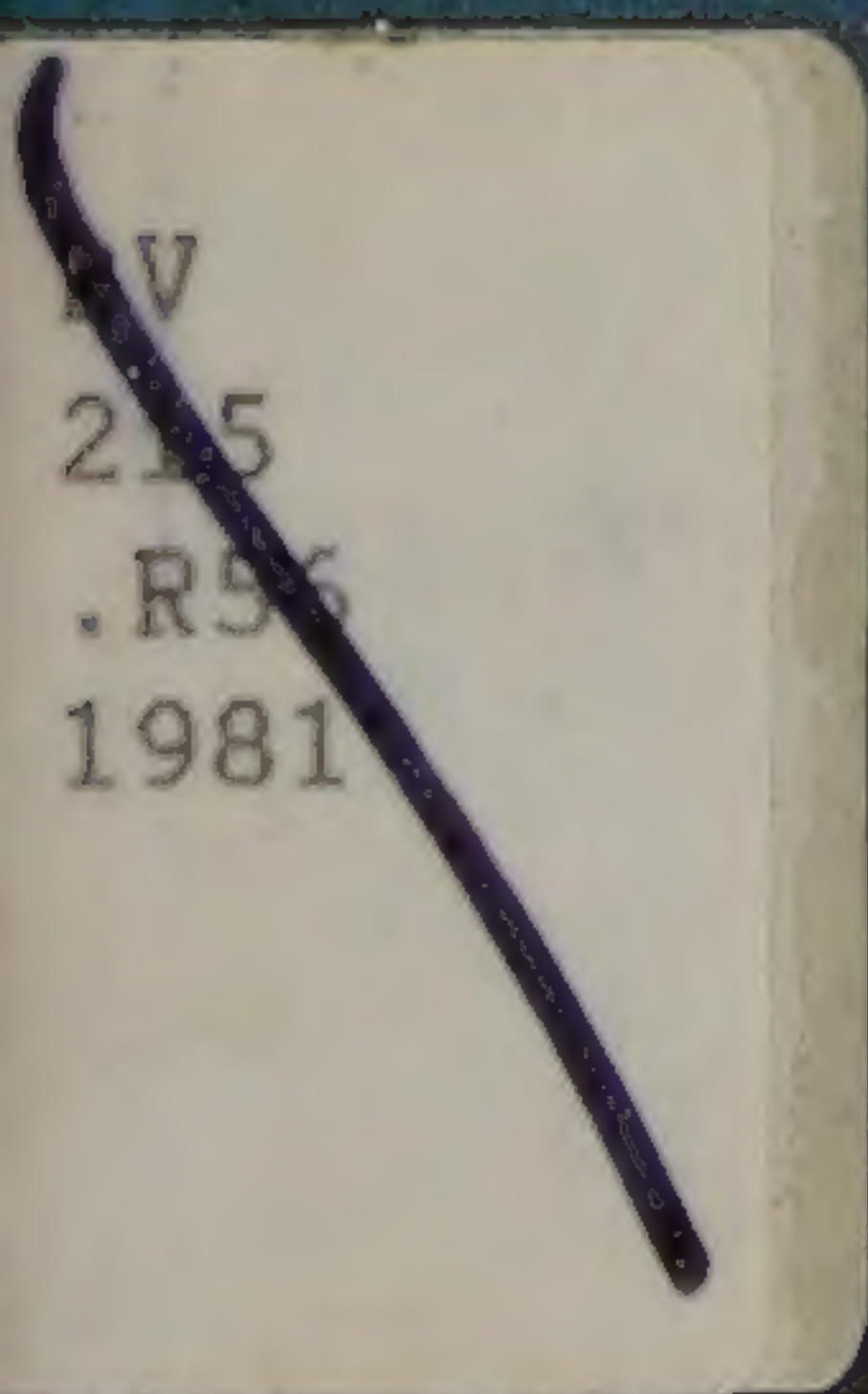
LEARNING TO PRAY

*Approaching God
through Creative Meditation*

ROSALIND RINKER

author of the bestseller,

PRAYER: CONVERSING WITH GOD



LEARNING TO PRAY

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PREFACE

The more I teach prayer and the more time I spend on this book, the more I realize that I am only touching the fringes of meditation. However, these "creative meditations" (plural) differ somewhat from the subject of meditation (singular) as taught by the mystics.

The past few years I have been reading with relish and heart-hunger books by Spirit-taught priests and clergy, as well as laypersons, so my journey into the deeper mysteries of prayer continues.

In this book I will share with you the story of how God led me into this special ministry and, in the accompanying cassette, you will be hearing some of the meditations which have brought many face-to-face with Jesus Christ.

I wish to thank my Tyndale House editors for their help and patience during the preparation of this book. I also wish to thank my faithful secretary, Frances Forkish, for her good work in typing the manuscript. I am also deeply indebted to my friends who prayed for me during the writing of this book.

Rosalind Rinker
Laguna Hills, California

THE CASSETTE WITH THIS BOOK

The creative meditations from the life of our Lord are stories and imaginative situations including you, the hearer, which will assure you that you are loved by God, and which will help you to forget yourself, thus opening yourself to listening with your heart.

If your cassette has been separated from the book, there are several meditations which you can read in this book. However, I urge you to get a cassette from your bookstore or the publishers, for we need both audio and visual interaction.

CONTENTS:

This cassette contains six different meditations which God has given to me during the years, and which I have used in prayer workshops to help bring people into the presence of our living Lord.

Tyndale House is the first publisher I could find who would put out a cassette together with a book or I might have released this material years ago. People are continually asking me for it. And now, here it is.

WHEN YOU LISTEN:

Choose a quiet place with no distractions, and close your eyes so your heart can hear better. You will soon

find the special meditation which is just for you. Listen to it again and again. It may be the "Little Not-meaning-to-get-lost Lamb" or "The Child Within Meets Jesus." Both of these meditations depict our human vulnerability to failure and magnify God's unconditional love and forgiveness.

MY PRAYER FOR YOU:

May the Lord Jesus give you an open heart and mind to receive all that his love has waiting for you. May Jesus himself become more real to you than ever before. May he give you new assurance that you are loved when you know you do not deserve to be loved.

YOUR PART NOW:

After listening to the meditations on the lamb or the child or any other, do not hold back broken sentences of need, or contrition, or thanks, or worship, or whatever. Let them come out, half audible, with tears, which are really liquid joy and are part of God's healing for you. Because Jesus is there. With you.

He is there with you. Now.

Say his name . . .

For you are loved . . . you . . . are . . . loved.

*The one truth you need to grasp is
God's eternal
unconditional
love for you.*

WHAT IS CREATIVE MEDITATION?

The purpose of creative meditation is to help make Jesus real to those who participate, the contents being based on incidents and teaching from the life and ministry of our Lord.

I'll never forget the first time I saw this happen to a college student in one of my classes. It was one of those God-appointed events (which we sometimes call accidents) when I was on the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship staff in Oregon in the fifties.

I was teaching portions of the Gospel of Mark. The purpose of this study was to help college students discover the truth of the identity of Jesus, which he quietly reveals through his life and death as well as through his miracles and his teaching. For that course, I used the question *Who Is This Man?* as our title, and later used that material for a book by the same name. (It's out of print at the present time.)

I gave them a simple outline to work on, to write out, and to discover for themselves, the who, where, what, and why of a passage. Then, with closed Bibles, from what they could remember of what they had just learned, we did role-playing—that is, acting out, impromptu, *in the past tense* the meaning of what had happened. That meant recall, observation, making

judgments, intuition, and even revelation as I soon discovered. Who was this man, and what power and authority did he have to do such miracles? And why was he on the scene?

Their creativity in acting out these scenes and their insights taught us all a great deal. One day, hours after our study was over, a certain young man sought me out and exclaimed, "He is real, isn't he? Jesus is a real person!"

That discovery changed his life from being a Christian who believed in Jesus, to a Christian whose Lord was alive and with him, right then and forever!

How did it happen? After the input (Bible study) and the action (role-playing) came the thought process (usually involving a time element) which we will call meditation. The fruit of that process for this young man was the reality of the presence of our risen Lord.

The discovery that student made caused me to rethink all the teaching I was doing, both in Bible study and in prayer. As I was a teacher and counselor, students were available to me for such short periods of time. The question I wrestled with continually was, how can these teaching sessions help give that young man, that young woman, a solid foundation upon which to continue to build his or her Christian life? Only the Holy Spirit could assist me in sorting out the commonplace from the important. Believe me, I spent time and thought in prayer, in reading, in deep thought, as well as in evaluating our program. Then one day in my reading I came across a paragraph that gave me the direction I was seeking. Evelyn Underhill (a British author) wrote these words:

*The simple contemplation of Christ is a very important part of the life of prayer; for we receive spiritual truth far more by absorption than by exploration.*¹

There it was! That was what happened! At the time I was not aware of the deeper meanings of contemplation; to me it simply meant “thinking about Jesus,” and this is what that college student did. The explanation (exploration) in studying Mark’s Gospel helped, but the absorption (contemplation) was the catalyst! The more he thought about it, the more he began to absorb the truth of the fact that Jesus is alive. He did rise from the dead. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is with us now . . . as the hymns and Scriptures tell us over and over. But he saw it for the first time when he began to *absorb* this truth, after having read and talked about it.

It was a revelation to me also. It was a wordless kind of prayer. It could be introduced to people through guided meditations which would bring them face to face with Jesus, our Savior. It would help them know they were loved for themselves alone. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to open hearts, to reveal Jesus. But it is the part of the pastor, or the teacher, to guide hungry children of God into meaningful, heartfelt prayer.

PRAYER WORKSHOPS

This was the beginning of the prayer workshops which I was to conduct during the next twenty years, but of course I didn’t realize it at the time. The first thing I did was to copy that sentence from Evelyn Underhill in the flyleaf of all my Bibles, and pray that it might be applied and worked out by the Holy Spirit.

Next, I knew that when people love one another they communicate. That meant, first, learning to pray with words, whether alone or with others.

Let's briefly consider praying aloud, as one of the steps toward meditation. I'll not go into all my teaching on this subject, as I've already done that in my book, *Praying Together*.

Being responsible adults, we speak with people who are present, not those absent. When one enters into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, words are important. There is a need to be aware of Jesus Christ as a living presence, for he longs to have us express ourselves to him, and he in turn will speak to us in various ways such as in our hearts, through the Bible, circumstances, others, and our reading.

Those who love one another communicate first in words, as they seek to discover each other. Later, much later, there is a beautiful silence which also communicates.

That is the progression which mystics call (1) prayer, (2) meditation, (3) contemplation. But we'll define and explain those terms in the next chapter. Yes, we need words, but sometimes in the presence of God, there are no words; we are simply there with him.

PRAYER, MEDITATION, AND CONTEMPLATION

Most of us are able to give several definitions of prayer and we have many favorite books on the subject. But how many of us know the other two aspects of prayer, *meditation* and *contemplation*, or have favorite books on those subjects?

Perhaps I should ask what new or old ones are you discovering? For the persons whom God has taught in their own fiery furnaces are the ones who speak to the hearts of others like you and me, who want to be more and more receptive to the will and love of God.

For years my favorite authors on the deeper truths of prayer were Andrew Murray and Evelyn Underhill, two British authors. Then, books by Dr. Morton Kelsey, Elizabeth O'Connor, Paul Tournier, and others led me into new and fresh thinking. Recently I am discovering such authors as Anthony Bloom, Rev. George A. Maloney, Rev. Edward Farrell, Msgr. David E. Rosage, Peter Van Breeman, and Dr. Henri J. M. Nouwen. Their writings incorporate the best of the early mystics, yet they also speak to our generation.

PRAYER DEFINED

Webster puts these three categories into these words:

Prayer—to address God with adoration, confession, supplication or thanksgiving (implying spoken or unspoken).

Meditation—to engage in contemplation or reflection; to focus one's mind or thoughts on, to ponder over.

Contemplation—the act of considering with continued attention; the state of mystical awareness of God's being.

Prayer, in general, can be classified as liturgical or spontaneous, public or private, vocal or silent.

Prayer is conversation between two who love each other. It is an expression of the human heart in conversation with God. There are many kinds of prayer and our Father hears them all, no matter what our creed or our mood may be. He sorts them out according to his loving purposes.

Prayer from the heart is

raising the heart and mind to God
talking with God
listening to God
waiting in his presence
worship . . . adoration
silence, just being there.

Prayer in ministry is

praying for and with each other
aligning ourselves with God's purpose
God at work in and through us, healing us
Loving and caring for others.

Praying together should be

simple, honest, direct
one subject at a time
listening to one another

being compassionate
agreeing
giving thanks.

Rev. Edward J. Farrell starts the list with the title of his book:

*Prayer is a hunger,*¹
a stillness
a growing
a response
a relationship
a journey
a risk.

Carlos Carretto simply states it like this:

*“You don’t have time to pray?
Do you have time to love?
To pray is to love God and
to love people.”*²

The real purpose of prayer is to know God and his love for you. Your response should be total commitment to him forever.

This brings us to the importance of practicing the presence of God, which makes prayer a way of life, not an occasional participated-in activity. Brother Lawrence’s book, *Practice of the Presence of God*, is the classic on this subject.

MEDITATION

Reading numerous books on meditation makes it difficult to select only a few passages to define this subject, for I would like to include them all. George Maloney, in *Inward Stillness*, devotes only about two paragraphs

in his introduction to the differences between Eastern Christian prayer of the heart and the modern course known as Transcendental Meditation. However, he states he is not interested at all in doing a scientific comparison between them. Nor am I at this time.

Maloney states, "The latter usually deserts Christianity, or renders it so all-embracing that a new religion develops for them, far removed from the historical Jesus and the Church's teaching of His message."³

The term "creative meditations," which I am using in this book, has one main purpose: to assist readers (and hearers of the cassette) in making Jesus Christ personal and real to their hearts, and to assure them that they are accepted and loved—and not on their behavior, or any merit system.

I had been giving these audible meditations for some years, when I first became acquainted with the writings of a British author, M. Dunlop, who writes extensively on the subject of meditation, so I sent for all her books. She gives two definitions for meditation, the first of which (discovered joyfully) is similar to that which I was led to through the guidance of the Spirit.

1. Discursive Meditation *guides our thoughts as we listen to words directing our inner awareness to Jesus Christ. This is often done by the use of a Psalm or incidents from the life of Jesus.*

2. Contemplative Meditation *rather than following a line of thought by which we raise our souls to God, holds the mind still as we realize the Presence of Christ, and the soul is enabled to rest in Him. It is simpler, but it is harder because it takes more practice and concentration.*⁴

Dunlop's definition of *contemplative meditation* (above) is generally placed in the category which we call *contemplation*. In *prayer*, the lips and the mind are both active. In *meditation*, the lips are quiet, but the mind is active, centering on, pondering on, reflecting on God himself; in *contemplation*, lips and mind are both quiet.

Morton T. Kelsey defines the goal of meditation in *The Other Side of Silence*.

*The goal of Christian meditation is to bring the creative power of the risen Christ to bear upon the totality of our confused inner being. In this way growth can begin and one can keep moving toward wholeness, which is one of the marks of the sons of God.*⁵

Dr. Anna B. Mow contributes toward this subject in her devotional book, *Springs of Love*.

*Meditation is coming into God's presence to listen. Christian meditation is coming into the presence of the living Lord to receive undreamed blessing from Him. It is coming to the God without Who wants to be the God within through his Holy Spirit.*⁶

*Meditation helps us see the whole truth as revealed in Christ. There is an answer for all anxieties and suffering. There is fulfillment for all emptiness.*⁷

Before her book was published, I was given a bound manuscript of *Our Journey Home*, by Maria Boulding. I carried it with me all over the United States for six months on my speaking engagements because God spoke to me through every page. With difficulty, I limit myself to her writing on one subject, meditation:

*Meditation in the strict sense means the use of our reason and imagination on the things of God. This naturally prompts a response of the will. These acts of the will may be of love, contrition, adoration, trust, thankfulness, or anything else. . . . Informal meditation can go on at any time of the day or night. The important thing to remember is that all these techniques are not prayer but launching pads, or ways of tuning in. The personal communion that flows from them is prayer. It is therefore essential that we listen as well as speak.*⁸

CONTEMPLATION

By this time, you can see that there is a great deal of overlapping in these three modes of prayer. What is important is that we are "alone with God, basking in his presence, feeling the warmth of his love for us. Contemplation is knowing at the core of our being that we are known and loved by God."⁹

How does meditation differ from contemplation? "Meditation is prayer with the mind, while contemplation is prayer with the heart."¹⁰

Apparently, words are not important in either of these kinds of prayer, but listening and awareness and silence are.

James Borst, whose book was published in India, writes:

*In contemplation the lips and mind are both quiet, as the heart reaches out to God's Presence, simply gazing at the Lord in wordless prayer, as our will seeks to be one with His will. It is the awareness of being loved by God at the core of one's being.*¹¹

Carlos Carretto, whose book *Letters from the Desert* brought me to a new brokenness, gives us his insights into the difference between prayer and contemplation.

*Prayer is not so much a matter of
talking as listening;
Contemplation is not watching,
but being watched
by the One who comes to us in love,
and who is sovereign
over all our encounters
and works in this world.*¹²

*Yes, love has reduced us to nothing.
It has taken from us all presumption
of knowing or being.
It has reduced us to true
spiritual childhood.
This is the highest state of prayer;
to be children in God's arms,
silent, loving, rejoicing.*¹³

Carretto writes, "There are a thousand ways of meditation, and everyone must find what suits him best. . . . It must be meditation clearly directed towards simplicity and interior silence."¹⁴

The Jesus Prayer, which I may write about in a later book, is one of the effective ways to meditate. Or choose a line from one of the Psalms, or a hymn you love—or even two or three words. One word is enough: Jesus. Lord.

THREE

THE INVISIBLE GOD / THE GOD WE SEE

Coming back to stark reality in this chapter, after exploring some of the mysteries of meditation and contemplation, we face the fact that we worship a God whom we cannot see. Lest this concern us too much, we must remind ourselves that the things we can see are all capable of being destroyed by death, fire, war, or bad credit. Paul reminds us that things we see are only temporary, but what is unseen is eternal (2 Cor. 4:18).

By faith [Moses] . . . endured as seeing him who is invisible (Heb. 11:27; RSV).

By faith [Moses] . . . persevered because he saw him who is invisible (NIV).

What are the advantages of worshiping a God who cannot be seen, as contrasted with gods made of wood, stone, clay, or paper? And may God have mercy on those of us who make our own gods from perishable things such as money, real estate, stocks and bonds, our profession, or even people we idolize.

During the years I spent in China, it was always interesting to see the amazement on the faces of village people when they discovered that we were not worshiping the chair at which we knelt (during family prayers) but our God, who is invisible. Their gods, being visible and having been made by human hands,

could be handled and destroyed. The God we worship is our Creator, and he has made us in his own image; some day in the Great Beyond we look forward to learning what that means.

It was a holy moment for me when I discovered that “seeing” God in a mental exercise is simply sensing his presence. In that holy moment, when we are aware that he is near, our lives are changed as acceptance, comfort, guidance, and love are given to us.

How wise our Creator God is to have it thus! How very wise he is came home forcibly to me when living in Chicago and visiting the Art Institute.

I saw a film displaying a magnificent grouping of French art, the treasures of Versailles, as well as depicting life as it was during the court of Louis XV and Marie Antoinette. I was fascinated with the power and favor which persons of high rank could bestow upon others. So desirable was this favor that men sold their souls for personal contact with the king or the queen. People jeopardized their honor, their position, their wealth, virtue, family, and even their own lives for royal favor. Once in possession of that favor, all manner of wealth and position were theirs.

My thoughts went to the possibility of our God’s being visible, and geographically located, holding court in our world today. Can you imagine what a colossal mess we humans would be in! If God needed personal attention, personal favors, personal services and could give the same to those who were fortunate enough to get next to him, think of the jockeying and manipulating there would be for position! Think of the jealousies (and results) because of favorites!

I hear someone say, “But our God isn’t like that.”

True, but we humans are.

The whole world system rises and falls because of political pull, finances, and possessions. The lack of these very things plagues the third world, as seen in their unstable governments, their suffering children, famine, and general lack of opportunity.

Material things seem desirable only when we do not possess them. When we own them, they lose their attraction. Material things are not primary in God's plan. The things that matter most are the things we can't see—the things we can't hold in our greedy hands. The invisible things are God's gifts to us: love, understanding, appreciation, acceptance, and forgiveness.

We worship an invisible God who, in the fullness of time, did become visible for a few short years in the person of Jesus Christ. Through personal faith in Christ we are assured of all that we need for a life of fulfillment and meaning here on earth.

Yet there are many who live without a personal assurance of God's love for them. Recently on the 700 Club, I heard an interview with one of our astronauts, Charlie Duke. I heard him say that the thrill of walking on the moon lasted only for three days afterwards; but when he found out that Jesus loved him just as he was—it changed his whole life, giving it direction and meaning that grows stronger daily.

Often a person's own sense of unworthiness and a low estimate of self is the barrier to knowing God and his love. Another barrier that needs to go down is that of unbelief, not believing that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh.

*For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;*

*and the government will be
upon his shoulder,
and his name will be called
"Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God,
Everlasting Father,
Prince of Peace."*

(Isaiah 9:6, RSV)

A rapid rereading of the Gospels of Luke or Mark will show that the people of Jesus' day were constantly amazed at him, asking, "Who are you? Who do you think you are?" His only answers were for them to observe what he did, that all his words and actions were what his Father did . . . for, "I and my Father are one. He who has seen the Father has seen me (John 14:8-11; 5:1-24).

We worship an invisible God, one who cannot be bought with favors or wealth or promises. In no way can we bring him down to our level of acquisition, self-seeking, and ambition. Neither can we segregate him to one denomination or one race.

Our God, being a Spirit and holy, and now with us in Spirit, cannot be corrupted nor influenced nor sold nor lost. But being invisible, he can be present with every one of us without favoritism, "a very present help in time of trouble." What joy! What wealth! What comfort! Moreover, he can be invited into a human heart and life—your heart—my heart.

*You have not seen him,
yet you love him;
And trusting in him now
without seeing him,
you are transported*

with a joy
too great for words.
(1 Peter 1:8, NEB)

Without having seen him
you love him;
though you do not now see him
you believe in him
and rejoice with
unutterable and exalted
joy.

(1 Peter 1:8, RSV)

THE GOD WE CAN SEE

In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
He was in the beginning with God;
all things were made through him,
and without him
was not anything made that was made.

In him was life, and
the life was the light of men.

And the Word became flesh
and dwelt among us,
full of grace and truth;
we have beheld his glory,
glory as of the only Son
from the Father.

And from his fulness have we all received,
grace upon grace.

(John 1:1-4, 14, 16, RSV)

Jesus:

*Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast
given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.*
(John 17:11, RSV)

MAKING JESUS REAL

For the past twenty years, since writing my best-seller, *Prayer: Conversing with God*, now in nine languages,¹ I have been accepting invitations to hold prayer workshops or prayer seminars in various churches, most of them desiring to have their members more involved in audible prayer with each other.

Helping them face their fears was only one of the obstacles which needed to be overcome. They needed leaders, so I wrote a guide book, *Conversational Prayer*, which has proved very helpful.

However, most important in the teaching of prayer was the importance of a personal relationship with our Father through Jesus Christ. Instead of aiming directly at a decision for this relationship (commonly known as evangelism) my guidance came in the form of “making Jesus real” to my hearers. As a result, I saw indifference and resistance melt away, revealing deep hunger, and the desired relationship came about quietly as they learned to pray.

You inquire how I did this? I really didn’t think it up at all. It was given to me as a gift by the Spirit, in a time of desperate need, and then confirmed to me again and again. Thus have I watched and learned, as the needs of those to whom I ministered became an open door, a gift for ministry.

CREATIVE MEDITATION

"How can I possibly make Jesus real to these young people?" I silently asked myself that question as I stood before them and prayed inwardly: I only have such a short time. God help me! My prayer was answered as I stood there looking into their faces.

I was visiting a missionary friend in Connecticut and had been asked to speak to the youth in a certain Presbyterian church on a Sunday evening. The room was narrow and every chair was taken. I sensed a defiance coming from them as they sat there, as if to say, "What do you have to say which could possibly interest us? Get it over with so we can get out of here."

I have always been very sensitive to the aura coming from my audiences. I learned this from Brother Mandus, an English author and teacher, and I always trust the Holy Spirit to clue me in and to give me his direction and anointing for each group. I really have only one message, but it comes out in dozens of forms and ways, all credit going to him with praise and thanksgiving.

Standing there quietly, I was in no hurry. My heart was saying: Lord Jesus, make yourself real to these young people.

Suddenly I knew what to do and I did it. There was no one to consult, no one to ask permission, no one to stifle that creativity, and I did it.

I took these young people on an imaginary airplane ride, for I had just had my first jet trip and it was very fresh in my mind. I would let them hear Jesus speak to them just as he had spoken to me, on that journey 35,000 feet above the ground from Chicago to Boston, for I had had an experience I would never forget.

To start with, I asked a question they were not expecting. "How many of you have had a ride in a jet plane?"

No hands.

"How many have been in some other kind of airplane?"

Many hands.

"Right now, in this room," I explained, "I'm going to take you up on a jet plane and let you feel what it is like. Are you ready? All eyes closed; for this is an imaginary ride, and imagination usually works better when our eyes are closed."

All heads went down . . . all except one. What now?

"To do this experiment, we need the full cooperation of everyone here, so if you do not feel like doing it, would you please step out into the hall until it is over."

Down went that head. All eyes were closed.

"Each one of you in his own seat; don't lean on one another. Sit up, reach for the buckles, and snap them shut. The plane is taxiing down the runway, stopping, revving up, shaking all over, and then BOOM! like a huge firecracker it runs a short distance and takes off in an oblique angle and up . . . up . . . up . . . almost straight up we go!

"Every one of you, right in that chair, going right up [my voice rising as I said this] up and up, right through the ceiling (no holes) and on up until leveling out, the pilot announces, 'We are now at an altitude of 35,000 feet and will continue our flight,' etc., etc., etc.

"With your eyes still closed, look down out of that

window and see if you can find your home, your church or your school . . . or even the main street. Look quickly, because we are going by so fast.

“Why, this jet glides along so smoothly and so fast that we are miles away from home! All you can see now is the broad face of the earth, with its checkered fields, tiny farmhouses, and here and there a body of water, or a ribbon of a highway.

“Clouds? Well, yes, there they are. Away down there, so far down they look like clumps of cotton batting stuck on the scenery.

“Suddenly—you are overwhelmed by questions, coming so fast they surround you, like bees tumbling out of a hive.

“This was a different voice:

Look how small everything down there is!

You can't even see a person, or an animal.

We're all pretty small, aren't we?

You, me, and all of us.

And there are millions of us down there.

Can't see them, but they're all there.

Does God see them?

Maybe God doesn't even know who's down there.

From here you can't see anybody.

Does it really matter what happens down there?

From here you can't see anybody.

Does it really matter what happens down there?

Does it matter what happens to you? or to anyone?

From here, who knows what's going on?

Can God really tell us one from the other?

“As if a voice were speaking audibly, the thoughts relentlessly continue:

You're just like a million ants.
Can't tell one from the other.
All huddling, hurrying, burrowing,
scurrying, collecting. And for what?
Number one. Get what you want.
What else? And who cares?
Who cares about the have-nots?
Or the distressed, the underprivileged?
Or the guilty and their fears?
Or the sick, the imprisoned and
their woes? Or the lonely and betrayed?

Does God care?
You thought he did . . . didn't you?
But how can he, when he's so big and you're
so small? And this earth?
Why, it's only one infinitesimal speck
of this immense universe!
Now take that little town you are flying
over right now. Do you think
God really cares about what goes on
down there? About who goes where?
Who belongs to whom? and to what?
Who sleeps where and with whom?
Who is well and who isn't?
Who does good and who does evil?
Who has houses and lands and cars and money
and who has none? Does God care?
Does God care who has loved ones to
come home to and
who has no one to come home to?
Does God care about that?

"When this happened to me, I sat there, unable to

answer those questions, because I know my Father in heaven cares for me. I began to resist consciously, because I know he cares. He is like Jesus and Jesus is my Good Shepherd, and he loves me.

“Suddenly with the very saying of his Name, he was there!

“And he is there beside you too, as you sit quietly in that seat, looking out of that window, thinking about all those questions.

“Listen, he is speaking to you.

My child, I am here.

I am here with you and within you.

Remember? I'm right here.

I've been here all the time.

*You know this, and even if you
forget me, I will never
forget you.*

Not for one instant.

*Now, about all those faithless, unbelieving
questions:*

I heard them too,

but that was not my voice.

I am your Good Shepherd.

I am the Light of the World.

I am the Bread of Life.

I am the resurrection and the life.

I am your Lord and Master.

I love you.

Do I ever change?

“I hear my voice saying, ‘No Lord, you never change. You are always the same.’

“His voice went on:

Yes, I'm just the same up here
in this plane with you,
as when I'm down there
on the earth beside you.
Exactly the same.

Aren't you the same person
sitting here in this plane
that you are when you're down there?
What difference does it make
where you are?

You are you, forever and always.
I am Jesus, your Savior.
Your good Shepherd,
your Redeemer, your Lord
and your Master.
I never change.
I care about you
and I love you."

I gave them a short moment to sit quietly and to absorb what they'd experienced. Then suddenly I clapped my hands: "We're back on the ground again, the flight is over. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for showing each one of us how very much you love us. Amen."

The meeting was over, and I moved to one side. Those young people sat there, and then slowly began moving around. A tall, handsome youth, with a girl on his arm, came directly to me.

"Wow!" he exclaimed. "That was terrific. Jesus was so real, and it was like he was talking to me." His eyes shone.

Once again guidance came as I sensed what was happening to that young man (Jesus was real, Jesus is real).

“Well, you gave yourself to him, didn’t you? You did—didn’t you?”

Looking right into his eyes, I saw faith born into those eyes from his heart, as he replied almost breathlessly, “Oh . . . yes . . . I did. I did . . . I gave myself to him.”

He had done it instinctively, hardly realizing it until the confrontation came, then he knew. I reached out and put my hand on his and prayed in a conversational tone: “Thank you, Lord Jesus, for opening Bob’s heart to receive you. Let him receive you as his own personal Savior right now. Amen.” And he repeated the words with joy and confidence.

My prayer was answered.

Jesus made himself real to Bob, to many others in that narrow little room, and I hope to *you*, also.

This meditation is also found in chapter 3 of my book *Communicating Love through Prayer*, and is included in the accompanying cassette as Meditation #5, *A Ride in a Jet Airplane*.

USING THE GIFT OF IMAGINATION

I have discovered that imagination is a powerful force in my spiritual life. Imagination influences my mind, my heart, my emotions, my conscious and unconscious actions and reactions. This is especially true when it comes to recognizing the presence of our risen Lord with me and within me.

Christ-in-me is a truth which brings stability to any trusting heart, to any child of God. Norman Grubb, author of many books on this subject (see Bibliography), has been putting out a new magazine the past few years titled *Union Life*. *Christ-in-me* is a liberating secret waiting to be discovered by believers who long for a closer walk with God. Of all the so-called victorious life teachings, this one brings the relief and the stability in Christian experience which we all seek.

To walk with Jesus means to talk with him. When I walk and talk with anyone, that one is obviously present with me. Practicing the presence of God has been part of my life ever since my conversion as a teenager, after reading Brother Lawrence's little book on the subject. I can't tell you that I see the face of Jesus, but I sense his being there; and often in worship, I am aware of his hands in my mind's eye and my imagination. Of all the portraits of Jesus, I like the

classic one by Hoffman and the later rugged one by Sallman. You will just have to use your own imagination, and in quiet silence keep the eyes of your heart open in your prayer and meditation time.

Let's talk about the power of imagination in our everyday lives so we may be better able to develop this faculty in our spiritual lives. We would all be on our way to fulfillment if only we could recognize that the gateway to all creativity is our power of imagination, which is truly a gift from God to each one of us.

Think for a moment of the world of art and the influence of creative imagination in many medias: on canvas, glass, metal, paper and wood—all of which bring untold beauty to our eyes. Then think of the great novelists, writers, musicians, scientists, inventors, yes, even the haute couture artists who set the trends of fashion. All of these started with shadowy images in the minds of their creators. Some created for the sheer joy of doing it. Others were motivated by money or desire for fame, still others by compassion in order to bring relief to suffering humanity.

Morton Kelsey in *The Other Side of Silence*, devotes one hundred pages, at least one-third of the book, to the development of the imagination and how to put it to work in our spiritual lives through prayer.

*There is a power and mystery in imagination which is beyond our comprehension. This is hard work and we can find a thousand lousy excuses for not doing it.*¹

I was delighted to find those one hundred pages for it is very affirming to know that the Holy Spirit has been teaching me as I minister truths he has already

taught others. I was practicing the healing of memories through creative meditation at least ten years before I read anything about it.

The same thing is taking place now in the use of imagination in prayer and meditation. The bookstores are full of volumes on these subjects which were not there a few years ago.

Many people lift an incredulous eyebrow when one speaks about adults using their imagination. Some think that it leads one down the primrose path to evil while others think that imagination is only for primitives, children, or artists.

Parents are sometimes afraid of an active imagination when it begins to take over the play-life of their children. They fear that some negative power will keep the child from adjusting normally to the outer world around him. The opposite is true. A child with a good imagination has great possibilities. One of the reasons some children learn quickly is that their powers of imagination have not been stifled or quenched.

THE CHILD WITHIN US

The gift of imagination can help us to rediscover the "child within us," and for most of us, that child needs both healing and love. On the accompanying cassette, I will be leading you in a meditation used in my workshops for more than ten years, but never before included in a series of meditations.

Jesus taught his disciples that if they would be great, if they would minister to others, they must become like little children. He said even more: that unless they did become like children they could not enter the kingdom of heaven!

One of the last poignant memories I have of my mother, a very creative person, was a conversation with her when she was eighty-three, shortly before the Lord took her Home.

Looking down at her hands, she observed, "These are not my hands."

"Well, whose are they?" I asked, knowing something good was coming.

She ignored me and went on, "This is not my body either, so old and misshapen, full of aches and pains. This isn't really me."

Playing along with her, I asked, "Who are you, then?"

Her answer floored me, and I've been telling the story ever since. "I'm still a little girl twelve years old, running around my father's farm in Minnesota!"

At eighty-three my mother had the imagination of a twelve-year-old. God forbid that I should live longer than she did, but if I do, I shall always be grateful for the gift of imagination, which I have given back to the Giver more than once. When it is committed to him, and used by him, it is a powerful tool for teaching, healing, and loving others.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE CHILDLIKE?

It means, among other things, to be uninhibited and unselfconscious, which happens only when your attention is not on yourself but on something else. In teaching people to pray aloud, I've found that centering attention on the four steps of prayer, as well as listening to each other as we pray, helps to overcome that self-conscious feeling. Centering attention on Jesus Christ then brings rich rewards. One of the traits

of childlike imagination is freedom from certain inhibitions.

The story of Lisa illustrates. When I was living in Chicago in the fifties, I was a guest in the home of Paul and Marie Little. At that time I was encouraging Paul to do more writing, which he eventually did. They introduced me to their small daughter Lisa and left us together in the living room.

I spoke first. "How are you today, Lisa?"

Very shyly, and not answering, she walked past me and fingered the drapes on the windows. Suddenly she turned and without a trace of shyness, announced, "My 'maginary name is Helen. What's your 'maginary name?"

I smiled, "My 'maginary name is Ruth."

At once we were friends and she came into my arms. We had an uninhibited time of getting acquainted. Without being taught, not needing to be taught, this delightful child found freedom with strangers in her fantasy of "having an 'maginary name" which drew me into that same freedom.

Another trait of being childlike is that of trusting. We call it having *faith*, or believing before we have the evidence. Jesus taught that when we ask for something, we should believe that we already possess it. Isn't that using one's imagination?

Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, "Be taken up and cast into the sea," and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you receive it and you will.

(Mark 11:23, 24, RSV)

Testing: After reading those verses, can you imagine the size of that splash!

Our trust should be like that story of the six-year-old: It was Christmas and time to write thank-you letters. His mother was helping him spell out the words as he lay there on the floor with pencil and paper. It was his decision to write Grandma first, and as Mother spelled out D-e-a-r G-r-a-n- . . . she suddenly stopped.

“What *did* your Grandma send you this year? I don’t remember receiving a package from her. What are you thanking her for?”

That trusting child answered, “Well, Grandma *said* that she was going to send me a stamp album, and if Grandma *said*, that’s as good *as*.”

In his imagination he already had that book in his hands and was enjoying it even before it arrived.

Our Lord wants us to be childlike enough to give him thanks for what he wants to give us, indeed, for what he already has waiting for us.

There is a right and wrong use of the imagination, which means that this gift or capacity can be used to detach us from reality, or on the other hand it can be used to develop us into real persons. It takes only a flash of insight to start that creativity flowing.

You can reactivate the power within you, so that you will be able to accept God’s love, and then to give that love away, not only through your actions but through the two powerful gifts of prayer and imagination.

Ask and you will receive.

(Matt. 7:7, NEB)

When the Spirit of truth comes
[and he is here]
he will guide you into all . . . truth. . . .
he will glorify me.

(John 16:13, 14, RSV)

You can begin right now to let the Holy Spirit, who is your teacher, guide you in the use of your imagination in order to make Jesus more real to you.

Carlos Carretto (*Letters from the Desert*) is one of my recent discoveries. He writes:

To pray is to love people,
so when you are very busy,
do not ask whether
you have time to pray;
ask yourself if
you have time to love.²

A SPECIAL MEDITATION

Goal: Realizing the presence and love of Jesus.

Method: A directed or guided meditation.

1. My child, I love you.

I love you unconditionally.
I love you, good or bad, with no strings attached.
I love you like this because I know all about you.
I have known you ever since you were a child.
I know what I can do for you.
I know what I want to do for you.

2. My child, I accept you.

I accept you just as you are.
You don't need to change yourself.
I'll do the changing when you are ready.

I love you just as you are.
Believe this—for I assure you it is true.

3. My child, I care about you.

I care about every big or little thing which happens
to you. Believe this.

I care enough to do something about it.

Remember this.

I will help you when you need me. Ask me.

I love you.

I accept you.

I care about you.

4. My child, I forgive you.

I forgive you, and my forgiveness is complete.

Not like humans who forgive but cannot forget.

I love you. My arms are open with love.

Please come here! Come here to me!

I forgive you.

Do not carry your guilt another moment.

I carried it all for you on the cross.

Believe this. It is true.

Rejoice . . . And Be Glad.³

RELEASING THE GIFT OF CREATIVITY

When the Lord God created mankind, he gave to every one of us a special capacity, a secret treasure, an untapped reservoir of creativity. Your gift is there too, within you, but it needs attention and action on your part if it is to be put into action, as God intends (1 Cor. 12; Rom. 12).

In spite of programmed setbacks and unfavorable circumstances, men and women who are consumed by this inner creative fire continue to break out of set patterns and suffer deeply because of social mores, parental and peer disfavor, religious tradition, and even prison and martyrdom, in order to fulfill their God-given destinies.

Who are the people you know who are creative? Stop for a moment and think. In your business, who has the good ideas which lead to sales? Among your acquaintances, who has real imagination in cooking and serving food? In decorating and planning a home? In your church, who comes up with new ideas which cause fresh interest?

Ask yourself if you are one of these. Or are you stuck in the routine of doing things always in the same old way? What would you like to see changed? In your business, in your church, in your home? Are you one who is always saying, "If only . . . ?"

I remember Corrie ten Boom giving a great talk on “if only” which we all loved. She would take out a flashlight and try in vain to turn it on. She would push it and pound it and shake it.

“If only this flashlight would turn on!”

Finally she would unscrew the back cap and lo and behold! A lot of nondescript rags would start to tumble out. Each one had a name which Corrie used in a loving way to probe our unrecognized sins.

If only I had more time!

If only I had married John instead of Bill!

If only we had more money!

If only we lived in Florida instead of Nebraska!

The whole point of that illustration was to get us to stop making excuses and begin to take advantage of the possibilities right within our reach. That phrase, *if only*, is like a huge block to the gift of creativity which is waiting to be released within each of us.

RELEASING CREATIVITY

A story told of Michelangelo illustrates this creative principle. A curious neighbor sat on the porch of his home watching Michelangelo tugging and pushing a huge hunk of rock down the street. Finally he asked why he was laboring so hard over an old piece of stone.

The answer came right back, “Because there is an angel in that rock who wants to come out!”

There is an angel who wants to come out of you, and who is waiting to be released. God made you in his image, which means that, back of this marvelous gift of creativity, God our Father is ready to assist and to aid you if only you will call on him.

Did you ever read the book *My Name Is Asher Lev*,

by Chaim Potok?¹ Seldom have I read a more sensitive story which involved me so deeply as did that young man's struggle to be creative. It was strictly forbidden by Jewish law to make images of any kind (the second of the ten commandments) which included drawing pictures with any substance on any kind of material.

However, so strong was that creative urge within young Asher as a child, that he surreptitiously and secretly used the ashes from his mother's cigarettes to draw the pictures which were continually in his mind. The development of the rest of the story is concerned with the almost insurmountable pain and agony of young Asher struggling to become an artist and finally succeeding, although in the attempt he alienated both his parents.

What would you like to do, what would you do, if time and money and age were no consideration? If you were not tied down with responsibilities? But since you are, why not let the creative side of you, which starts with imagination, begin to dream and to think and to activate all the possibilities which are waiting to be explored.

TURNING NEGATIVES TO POSITIVES

Not only your dreams, but also your irritations and your rebellions can be turned into something creative to bless you and others.

Perhaps you should sit quietly in some old church, or near the sea, or your own favorite place, and tune in to the Lord God who has a plan waiting for you.

Sometimes the tuning-in comes through an unexpected event, or something which is quite accidental and unplanned. That is how Mildred Rice and I dis-

covered *conversational prayer* that day in Bei Ching, China, when we found our traditional way of praying left much to be desired.

Mildred prayed first, and her subject was that two persons be reconciled—we'd been asking for that for a month at least. Suddenly I remembered that it was all over. Finished. They had been reconciled that very morning. But from past experience, I knew Mildred would go on from one subject to another for a long time and I couldn't wait to tell her the good news . . . so I interrupted her! And together we praised the Lord.

That was when our creative imaginations got busy, and we both expressed our dissatisfaction with the traditional way we were praying: long prayers, and very impersonally; "we, us, our" rather than "I, me, my"; repetitive, informing God instead of doing business with him. We decided to pray by *subjects*, one subject at a time in dialogue as it were, as led by the Spirit, praying many times instead of only once.

We called it *conversational prayer* and God has honored that moment, as people everywhere have found it works because it draws them closer to God and to each other. The story of that discovery became a best-seller with over a million copies sold: *Prayer—Conversing With God*.²

I am always delighted when I find people who have never heard of nor read that book but who have been led by the same Holy Spirit to do the same thing . . . to pray together conversationally by subjects . . . until guidance or praise is given. After all, we do have the same Teacher.

GOD'S UNCONDITIONAL LOVE FOR YOU

Question: Do you believe that God loves you unconditionally? An unsure answer means that you need teaching, or perhaps your need is to be un-taught first. You also need to spend some time in the presence of Jesus, who loves you. Perhaps in a quiet church, or near still waters, or the wide, wide ocean, or a park. Places like these are my favorites, so I suggest them to you.

Just feasting my eyes on all the varieties of things which God has put on this earth seems to bring us closer together.

Question: Are you aware that what you do and who you are make a significant difference? When you know that God loves you just as you are, others instinctively know there is a difference. God's love radiates, glows from within; it shows in one's eyes, the tone of one's voice. Like a light in a dark place. Jesus said a few things about that: A light that is set on a hill cannot be hid. You are the light of the world.

That inner knowledge that God loves you, that you are not judged by him on any merit system, produces a subtle radiance which cannot be hidden. It will flow from you like a river and bring joy and healing to all who are near you.

Question: Do you consider yourself a teacher? You are, whether you realize it or not. Others are observing you and are influenced by your words, actions, decisions, and by your very attitude. You yourself are a teacher of God's love just by being you.

Listening to the *Meditations* on the cassette accompanying this book will help you in replacing negative thoughts with positive affirmations.

"Thank you, God, for loving me."

Repeat it over and over until it gets down into your subconscious mind where it will influence your whole life.

There will be an easy but effective meditation given at the close of this chapter which will soon become a habit whenever you are alone, or waiting for an elevator, or put on "hold" on the telephone.

Question: Are you aware that there are thousands of people who do not know or do not believe that God loves them personally? If you think this is an exaggeration, try asking a few persons around you. Use one of these simple questions and expect an answer.

Do you *think* God loves you?

Do you *believe* God loves you?

Do you *know* how very much God loves you?

I've given you three choices, for in case you find some embarrassment in asking the question, turn your mind to which one of the three questions you want to use. It helps you to forget yourself.

DISCOVERIES I MADE

Very early in the fourteen years I spent with IVCF counseling college students, I discovered the appalling unbelief (and sometimes guilt) existing among

them when it came to knowing God loved them, personally.

“Oh, yes, God could love someone who was worthy, someone who deserved it—*but me?*”

My next discovery was the source of this failure. Somewhere along the line (church or school or home) we have failed to teach our children the real truth about God’s great love for sinners—and I mean saved sinners as well as unsaved sinners.

It was a red-letter day for me when (after being a believer in Christ for twenty years) I discovered I was a sinner in three tenses: past, present, and future. I was a sinner and God saved me. I am a sinner and I still need a Savior. In heaven forever I’ll be a sinner, saved by grace.

Jesus came not only to take the sins of the whole world upon himself, but to show us the love of his Father for his own children who wander away from time to time. (Meditation #3, The Little Not-meaning-to-get-lost Lamb.)

That meditation was given to me (from Luke Chapter 15) for children like you and me in God’s family who sometimes wander away, and who need to know God loves them regardless of their failures and sins.

Our failure to teach this truth to our children so they can later understand it as a viable life-style can be traced back to numerous things, some of them in our own childhood, some in the lives of our children. Such as: “God loves good boys and girls.” Or, “God won’t love you if you do that.”

Lack of knowledge of God’s love can also be traced back to broken homes, orphanage experiences, or lack of parental love and affection. Giving *things* is not giving yourself-with-love.

Because of these discoveries I asked myself the question mentioned in chapter 4 as I stood before those young people. "What can I do to help make Jesus Christ real to them?" That question is still a basic one, for love can come only from real people. Only a real person can give love: love which understands, love which gives security, and love which permits maturity.

I have known adults who told me that, failing to find this kind of love from their parents or foster-parents, as very young children they tried to find it by going to Sunday school even if it meant getting up alone, ironing their own clothes, and going by themselves. "Jesus loves me, this I know," held a message they were hungry to hear over and over.

When we say Jesus is a real person, what do we mean? We mean he is not a myth, nor an allegorical figure, nor a person of the past, dead and buried. He is alive. He rose from the dead, and comes to live within those who open their hearts to receive him.

*A real person is one who knows who he is,
believes in himself,
knows his purpose in life,
knows he is loved,
can both give and receive love
from others.*

Have you read *The Velveteen Rabbit*? Skin Horse, the oldest member of the nursery, lovingly explains to Bunny a similar concept in order to become REAL.

"What is REAL?" asked the Rabbit. "Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?"

"Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin

Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become REAL."

"Does it hurt?" asked the Rabbit.

"Sometimes," said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. "When you are REAL you don't mind being hurt. . . . Once you are REAL you can't become unreal again, it lasts for always." ¹

If being loved for a long, long time makes one a real person, I ask you: How long has God loved you? Longer than you'll ever know. More than you'll ever know.

Jesus was a real person. Jesus is a real person. He states that his Father loved him from the beginning, and he prays for all of us, in John chapter 17, that we might know about that love (vv. 23, 26). Added to that, Jesus taught that we must love one another just as he has loved us (John 15:9, 12).

Jesus became real enough to that young man who listened to my meditation in chapter 4, so that he was willing to give his heart away! No doubt he had been told before, but apparently he had never heard it before.

You may have been told, but have you really heard? I know it sounds too good to be true, and your own heart will condemn you and so will other people. But, God isn't like people.

God loves you unconditionally, just as you are.

That statement has been misunderstood, misquoted and twisted many times (even printed incorrectly by Christian magazines) to mean something it does not mean. The whole truth is this: God loves you unconditionally just as you are, but he does not always like what you do. And he has a plan to take care of that, too.

Some legalistic-minded people think that statement says, "You can do anything you please and get away with it." It does not mean that.

It does mean that God's love is not based on any merit system. Do-gooders cannot add merits to gain more of his love. And mis-doers do not forfeit merits by wrong doing. In plain English, if I sin, it does not mean God stops loving me, or that when I obey him, he loves me more than before.

God loves me, the basic person, me, just as I am, with eternal unconditional love. The proof of that is demonstrated by the person of Jesus Christ.

The simple gospel story is: Jesus Christ died for sinners: publicans, prostitutes, lepers, demon possessed, tax collectors, the thief on the cross—in short, all who are desperate, all who are needy, all who are out-cast and despise themselves, all who need a reason for living.

As the Lamb of God, slain before the foundation of the world, Jesus Christ took upon his own body all the sins of the whole world when he hung upon that cross.

The Good News is:

All my sins are already forgiven.

Jesus never has to come and die again for the sins of mankind.

Including me . . . including you.

It is finished.

He is the Shepherd of my soul.

(Heb. 9:25, 26; 1 Peter 2:24, 25)

P.S. I do believe in confession of sins for believers.

(1 John 1:7, 9)

A GIVING-LOVE MEDITATION

1. Repeat the name of Jesus and one other (like yours, his, or hers) "Jesus . . . Sally" through the entire meditation.
2. Repeat them over and over in a spirit of love.
3. Imagine God's love coming down like a river flowing into you. Pause. Experience this. Enjoy it. Then . . .
4. As you repeat his or her name, let that flow go right out of you to surround that person (absent or present).
5. Say his or her name over and over, giving more love.
6. Imagine love like a cloud, penetrating, enveloping him or her.
7. Imagine (picture) God's love on his or her face.
8. Let the flood of wordless thanksgiving fill you from top to toe. Worship. Love.

I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. . . . Love one another as I have loved you.

(John 15:11, 12, NIV)

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Already in the foregoing chapters I have shared with you various incidents which began to impress upon me the importance of meditation as a means to realize Jesus as present and alive and not merely a historical figure.

The knowledge of how to proceed in some of those situations had roots in earlier experiences. I have discovered that as I plan and pray and write, my memory is activated and things begin to fall into place. I see more clearly than ever the guidance of the Lord.

I think one of the first which I can recall was the role-playing we were asked to do as students, when I took several courses in inductive Bible study at New York Theological Seminary. That was during my staff days with Inter-Varsity in the early fifties, and the book we studied was the Gospel of Mark.

I'm sure the gift of imagination was developed through such role-playing, and it all started with that single motivation: realizing the presence of our risen Lord, so we would heed his voice and not be afraid to talk with him or to trust him.

My third book, *Who Is This Man?*, came out of that experience and was prepared for college students. For

years we mimeographed it, then off-printed it, and finally Zondervan Publishing House put it into book form in 1960. It went out of print last year, but twenty years is a pretty good record for a Bible study book. I have letters from total strangers who, studying the life of Jesus from that book, found him as their personal Lord and Savior.

A good teacher uses imagination to bring the characters to life. Only last summer I heard Mother Angelica¹ speak to several thousands at the Santa Ana SCRC² Convention Center. She told the story of Abraham with so much creative imagination that we all listened as though we had never heard it before. She made him so human and real that we laughed and cried over a story we all knew by heart. Such ability is a real gift from God.

Then I remember leading a group in Bible study at an early Camp Farthest Out in the Texas panhandle. I asked them to study the passage inductively (that is, from the stated facts to discover the main teaching). After that, I directed them in role-playing. Our subject that day was the healing of the leper as told in Mark 1:40-45.

I divided them into three groups, and each group worked out their own presentation, with only ten minutes to discuss and prepare it. I told them, "No open Bibles, please." They were to work from memory. I was pleased with the spirit with which each group performed.

That wasn't all, as I discovered the next day as we prepared to study another passage. When I asked for volunteers to take the part of the sick person, there were so many that I was puzzled until someone told me why. The day before, those who took the part

of the leper were themselves healed of their own ailments as they played the role, so real was the presence of Jesus in their hearts and in their midst.

I must confess that I was using this creative method in group meditations as long ago as fifteen years, without putting it into print or including it on any of my cassettes.

There were several reasons I never wrote the ideas down. One of them was that I didn't know what people would do with them. Another was fear of what people might think. And there was a basis for that fear.

I had used some of this material at a banquet for teens in a certain Pasadena church and a psychiatrist present asked me if I knew what I was doing. I told him I did. He warned me that the youth attending this banquet were an unruly bunch of kids who wouldn't listen anyway. (But Jesus was there and they *did* listen.)

He said more. He said that because I was not trained in this field, it was dangerous to do anything that even bordered on hypnosis (which he felt I was doing). He told me to be careful about what I put into people's minds when they were in a receptive mood. I felt he contradicted himself there; he had just told me those kids wouldn't listen. Besides, I knew in my inmost heart that I was being guided by the Spirit and I wondered if my critic was (in that instance).

At any rate, I felt guided to continue using these meditations in my teaching ministry, especially in prayer workshops, for they never failed to bring the living presence of Jesus Christ very near to my hearers.

I have not put them into print as meditations until now. I did use that jet airplane story in chapter 3 of

my book, *Communicating Love through Prayer*, but not as a meditation—only as an experience of God's love.

MY PRAYER FOR YOU

As you listen to the various meditations which are on the tape, my prayers will be with you. I pray that our Lord Jesus will become so real to you that you will find yourself talking to him and with him.

I pray that by listening and by reading the Scriptures each of you will find your own imagination awakened.

I pray that our loving Father will bring results which will be suited to your own personality, or circumstances, or ministry.

There is within all of us that creative spirit which is stronger than our own ego-ideas, if only we will recognize it and set it free—always with love.

The Holy Spirit wants to utilize every capacity within us, some of which have been pushed down to deep levels through no fault of our own, and which need to be released and/or healed in his holy presence.

Keep Jesus in mind.

Always he is here.

Keep Jesus and his love for you in mind.

*So much of what we choose to act upon
depends upon whom we have in mind.*

Hurting goes away.

Love never goes away.

Love is forever.

JESUS, STAND AMONG US

Jesus, stand among us

In Thy risen power;

Let this time of worship
Be a hallowed hour.

Breathe Thy Holy Spirit
Into every heart;
Bid the fears and sorrows
From each soul depart.

Thus with quickened footsteps
We pursue our way,
Resting in Thy Presence
Keep us day by day.

William Pennefeather³

MEDITATIONS ON THE CASSETTE

- Meditation One: *The child within meets Jesus*
Meditation Two: *The living light of Jesus (which
 opens your mind)*
Meditation Three: *The little not-meaning-to-get-lost
 lamb*
Meditation Four: *When life seems meaningless*
Meditation Five: *A ride in a jet airplane*
Meditation Six: *You and your children meet Jesus*

Please turn back to the first pages and read once more the section called *The Cassette with This Book*.

Each time you listen, allow a new message to come through to you. As your life or your circumstances change, or as relationships become complicated, there can be a special message just for you. These recorded messages were Spirit-guided and given to a group which participated in the taping. Then together we prayed for each one who would ever listen to them.

Share with someone the special message which came through to you. Share by letter, by telephone, or in person. Your willingness to do this will strengthen your desire to do the will of God and make that will clearer than ever.

MEDITATION ONE: THE CHILD WITHIN MEETS JESUS

Scripture: Mark 9:33-37 (TLB)

When the disciples were arguing about who was the greatest, "[Jesus] placed a little child among them and taking the child in his arms . . ." taught them his truths.

Subject: A personal confrontation with Jesus. Let the child within you respond to Jesus, that child that needs love and appreciation. This meditation will help you to have a personal encounter with Jesus, who loves you. The child within you needs Jesus.

The story behind this meditation:

One of the first times I hesitatingly used this meditation was in a workshop during a Faith-at-Work conference in one of the southern states, almost fifteen years ago.

After I give the four steps of prayer: worship, thanksgiving, confession, and intercession, the group practices with a few simple sentences. For some people this is an unbelievably traumatic experience, if they have never prayed aloud in their whole adult lives.

As I prayed over this, I knew it was not an insurmountable obstacle. Love and prayer go together, for prayer is a love-language. A personal encounter with Jesus! That would do it. And that is when this Meditation was given to me by the Holy Spirit, who is our teacher and guide.

Asking them to close their eyes, I retold the story, much as it is recorded on the cassette. I was amazed

at the response. They actually met Jesus! They *were* children in his arms. It *was* easier for them to talk to him then because they knew they were loved.

Actually it was the beginning of all my own teaching on "the healing of memories," before I even knew such a term existed.

On this particular occasion, as soon as the session ended, a distraught woman cornered me.

"I didn't do your meditation. You want me to be a little child again! Well, you've thrown me into terrible confusion. That was the unhappiest time of my whole life."

"Would you like to tell me about it?" I asked. "I'm sure our Lord has an answer just for you."

She proceeded to tell me that when she was very young, an only child, both parents had been killed in an automobile accident. The courts gave her into the custody of two old-maid aunties who knew nothing about bringing up a little girl. Whippings and discipline without love were handed out daily. She was compelled to wear clothes no other little girls wore (middy blouses, for instance). She ran away from home more than once, hoping to find a home where there was love, only to be brought back by the police for more whippings. She cried herself to sleep night after night, blaming God for taking her own mother away from her.

As she spoke, I silently waited for wisdom and the word of knowledge from the Holy Spirit, and it came.

"My dear, that little girl within you needs the healing touch of Jesus' hands. Sit down here, and I'll pray for her." As I laid hands on her, words of love and of healing were given me as I prayed; she got up, thanked me, and left.

I didn't see her again until the next morning, where in a general meeting of praise she stood up and told this story, and more. Immediately upon leaving me, she had gone to her hotel room where her husband took one look at her and asked, "What happened to you?"

"I was prayed for, and Jesus healed the little girl inside me," and she told him how it happened.

Then it was his turn, for he too needed such a healing. She told him to sit down and she would pray for him (as I had prayed for her). Jesus healed the little boy inside that grown man with all the hurt places which had been hidden for so many years.

A special message for you:

*Jesus is present with you now,
as you read these pages.*

*He wants you to come to him
as a little child,*

*He wants to put his arms around you
and let his healing love
be given to you.*

*Let the gift of imagination
open your mind.*

*Let the Holy Spirit give you
your own personal encounter
with Jesus Christ.*

For further meditation:

I have loved you even as the Father has loved me.

(John 15:9; 18:26, TLB)

*I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore
with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.*

(Jeremiah 31:3)

MEDITATION TWO:
THE LIVING LIGHT OF JESUS
(WHICH OPENS YOUR MIND TO THE TRUTH.)

Scriptures: John 8:12 (NIV; TLB)
John 12:35, 45, 46 (TLB)
2 Corinthians 4:7

Subject: Meditating on Jesus, the light of the world, has two special meanings for us.
First, the healing, freeing light entering into our minds, begins to free us from pride, prejudice, or resentment which are largely responsible for bringing illness. Jesus brings healing to body, soul and spirit through the living holy light of his presence.
Second, then we are vessels, lamps, to let that light flow out of us to others in the same healing, freeing power.

The story behind the meditation:

There is no special story on this one. As I read these Scriptures, my heart began to long for that light of Jesus to be poured into me, to fill me, to flood me, to saturate me. Later, I began to give this meditation in my workshops and saw others experienced the same light upon them and within them.

Prayers included in this meditation:

Thank you Jesus. , *

Praise you, Jesus.

Jesus, I praise you.

Thank you for being my Light.

Lord Jesus, let your light
shine upon me, into me,
around me, all over me.

Lord Jesus, let your healing
power and love come to me.

As your light comes to me
let me see things with your eyes.
Let me feel things with your heart.
Let me love with your love.

I just don't have enough of my own.
Thank you,
Lord Jesus.

For further meditation:

And as the Spirit of the Lord works within
us (and reflects from us),
we become more and more
like him.

(2 Corinthians 3:18b, TLB)

Then Jesus spake again unto them, saying,
I am the light of the world: he that
followeth me shall not walk in darkness,
but shall have the light of life.

(John 8:12)

Later, in one of his talks, Jesus said
to the people, "I am the light of the
world. So if you follow me, you won't
be stumbling through the darkness, for
living light will flood your path."

(John 8:12, TLB)

MEDITATION THREE:
THE LITTLE
NOT-MEANING-TO-GET-LOST LAMB

Scripture: Luke 15

Subject: 1. Jesus the Good Shepherd.
2. God our Father and his eternal unconditional love shown through Jesus.
3. You and me. How did we get lost?
What were we looking for?
How did we get into his arms?

The story behind the meditation:

I was in my late thirties when this truth finally was revealed to me: God loves all his children, especially those who get lost trying to find something (someone?) they think they want. Reading chapter 15 of Luke's Gospel, I noticed the repetitions: Three things got lost, three things were found, and in each case there were three who represented the loving Father who looked for or waited for the lost one. In each case there was great rejoicing because that which was lost was found.

In my early years as a believer, I was taught that if I sinned, I was a sinner and thus needed to be "saved" over and over again. I now realize that I am a sinner in three tenses: past, present, future.

Past: I was a sinner and Jesus saved me.

Present: I am a "saved" sinner, and I still need a Savior.

Future: Through eternity, I will be a sinner saved by grace.

Throughout life, with its ups and downs, there is security in the family of God. Jesus died once for the sins of all mankind, and he never needs to come and die again (Hebrews 9:24-26, TLB).

Reading that famous passage in Romans 8:31-39 on “what can separate us from the love of God” I would always add, “Yes, but my own sin can separate me from God.”

Only as an adult who began to read the Bible carefully, did I find that error revealed to me. If I say my own sin can separate me from God, that makes me greater and more powerful than God! For through Christ, the Lamb of God, all my sin (inherited) and all my sins (committed) are nailed to the cross forever.

Yes, I do believe in confession when I miss the mark. Yes, I do get lost on little bypaths of my own sometimes, but what a faithful Shepherd is Jesus my Lord! He teaches me more through failure than through any other means.

And his everlasting love and presence are always there when I call his Name, like the little pilgrim, called “Little Much Afraid” on her journey toward healing, in *Hinds’ Feet on High Places*, by Hannah Hurnard.¹

For further meditation:

Read Romans 8:31-39 and Hebrews 9:24-26 from *The Living Bible*.

As you listen to the story, retold on the cassette, I want you to imagine that *you* are that little lamb, so that you can receive all the love and caring the shepherd bestows upon it, when he finds it.

MEDITATION FOUR: WHEN LIFE SEEMS MEANINGLESS

Scriptures: John 20:19-30
Psalms 23, 139, 51
Matthew 11:25-30

Subject: 1. To bring hope and meaning once again to you who feel life has come to a complete standstill.
2. To help you identify with others who are in despair right now.

The story behind the meditation:

This is the story of eleven helpless, hopeless, condemned men. It tells what happened to bring them to this state, and how they found release.

Truth taught in this meditation:

The presence of Jesus, our risen Lord.
His all-knowing, accepting love.
The key that turns darkness to light.
The power of the name of Jesus.

Affirmations which are suggested:

Defined: An affirmation is a valid statement which when repeated endlessly tends to instruct one's subconscious mind, and to broadcast health and truth to body, mind and spirit.

1. Affirm the Kyrie Eleison:

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy. ;
Lord, have mercy.

2. Affirm God's omniscience: He knows everything. He knew the answer to your problem long before you even knew you had a problem.
3. Affirm your trust in his love and his wisdom in your particular case, even when you can't feel or see a sign of hope anywhere.
4. Affirm the presence of Jesus with you.
Like: *Jesus, you are here.*
Jesus, you are with me.
I can't see you, but I believe you.
Help my unbelief.
5. Finally, affirm and repeat it until you believe it:
Lord, you have a plan for me. I belong to you, I am yours.

Trust Jesus . . . for you are loved.

Hear the words of Jesus for you:

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

(Matthew 11:28, 30, NIV)

MEDITATION FIVE: A RIDE IN A JET AIRPLANE

The story behind this meditation:

This is the only meditation in the series which is written out. You will find it in chapter 4, titled *Making Jesus Real*.

Subject: My thoughts while taking my first jet plane ride and what happened next.

Truths taught in this meditation:

The all-knowing love of God.

The ever-present Christ who loves you.

That you are precious to God, no matter who you are, what race, color, or sex.

Purpose: For those especially who ask the question: Does God really know? Does God really care? I've found that those questions can be answered, but there are many questions which do not have answers. For every answer I've found, it seems four more questions pop up. However, I've found a secret I'll share with you: Jesus himself is the answer, as long as I'm on this earth. Some day we shall know, even as we are known.

Scripture for further meditation:

O Lord you have examined my heart and know everything about me.

You know when I sit or stand. When far away you know my every thought.

You chart the path ahead of me, and tell

me where to stop and rest.

Every moment, you know where I am.

You know what I am going to say before

I even say it.

You both precede and follow me, and

place your hand of blessing on my head.

(Psalm 139:1-5, TLB)

Let your heart expand with thanks for God's love. Give yourself to him again, if it's been a long time since you first did. Read the rest of Psalm 139 in your own Bible, or buy yourself a copy of *The Living Bible*, a paraphrase which is easily understood.

MEDITATION SIX: YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN MEET JESUS

Scripture:

Once when some mothers were bringing their children to Jesus to bless them, the disciples shooed them away, telling them not to bother him. But when Jesus saw what was happening, he was very much displeased with his disciples and said to them, "Let the children come to me, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as they. Don't send them away! I tell you as seriously as I know how that anyone who refuses to come to God as a little child will never be allowed into his Kingdom." Then he took the children into his arms and placed his hands on their heads and he blessed them.

(Mark 10:13-16, TLB)

Message on the cassette:

To enable you (by the voice of another giving suggestions) to paint three pictures on your mind—past, present, future.

Purpose of these meditations:

1. For you to bring your children or your grandchildren to Jesus for his blessing.
2. For you as a mother (or any relative) to have Jesus' touch bring inner healing to you, especially when you feel that because of lack of experience or knowledge you failed that particular child.
3. Since there is no past, present, or future with Jesus (all is an eternal *now*), he can touch you and the child, no matter what age she or he is now, and bring inner healing.
4. As with electricity, both the negative and the

positive are needed for that miracle of power; so trust and believe, and give thanks.

Just Remember

Jesus is the wounded Healer.

He is touching you, healing you, now.

*He forgives, and removes the emotional
bondage of past events.*

Prayer of thanksgiving

*Thank you, Lord Jesus,
for the touch of your hands
upon me, upon my child,
my children, grandchildren.*

*Thank you, Lord Jesus, for the
inner healing coming to
all of us right now
by the power of your Holy Spirit,
who works miracles of
inner healing in the
child within.*

*And thank you that you take away
the guilt feelings that have
imprisoned me for so long,
and have given me your
light, your love, your forgiveness.*

*Thank you for your cleansing, fulfilling
love, for your acceptance,
your hands of blessing upon me.*

We thank you.

We praise you.

We bless you.

We love you.

Amen.

“We love him, because he first loved us.” (1 John 4:19)

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2. Carlos Carretto, *Letters from the Desert* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1972).
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5. Morton T. Kelsey, *The Other Side of Silence* (Paramus, NJ: Paulist Press, 1976), p. 175.
6. Anna B. Mow, *Springs of Love* (Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 1979), p. 7.
7. *Ibid.*, Intro. ix.
8. Maria Boulding, *Our Journey Home* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1979), pp. 99, 100.
9. David E. Rosage, *Speak, Lord* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1973), p. 46.
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11. James Borst, *A Method of Contemplative Prayer* (Bombay, India: Asian Trading Corp., 1973).
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3. William Pennefeather, *Jesus Stand Among Us*, Camp Farthest Out Songs (St. Paul, MN: Macalester Park Publishing Co., 1960), #115.

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Sunday night youth group. The subject was prayer. The long, narrow room filled with teenagers, laughing, jostling. Their distant, skeptical looks almost defied the missionary speaker to say anything worth their listening to for the next hour.

"How can I possibly make Jesus real to these young people?" she wondered.

As she started to speak, the room grew quiet—something very unusual was happening. The kids sat quiet, their eyes closed, listening. Time flew by.

After the meeting a tall, handsome youth, his eyes sparkling, walked forward to talk to the missionary. "Wow! that was terrific. Jesus was so real—as if he was talking to me!"

"You gave yourself to him tonight, didn't you?" She seemed to know from the look in his eyes.

"Yes, I did . . . I really did!"

Rosalind Rinker shares, in this book on the accompanying cassette tape method and message of her ministry in meditation. Your own living room Bible study group, your church, can share the rediscovered experience of creativity that Miss Rinker has been sharing in her seminars and classes around the world.

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